

Migrating birds

Birds are able to fly so they can travel from one place to another. This helps them look for food, find a mate, build a nest and raise young. Some birds stay in one area all their lives. They are able to find food all year round so there is no need for them to fly very far.



Birds that stay in this country all year are called residents because they live here all the time. Mute swans are resident birds.

Mute Swans

Some birds spend part of the year in one place and then fly to a different place for the rest of the year. This is called migration.

Winter visitors are birds that come to this country only in the winter. They spend the summer further north. In the Arctic during the summer there are long daylight hours and plenty of insect food in pools where the ice has melted. This makes it an ideal place to raise a family. However in the winter there is no food because the insects die in the cold weather and the pools freeze. The birds must fly south where it is warmer and there is food or they will die. Coastal wetlands such as Chichester Harbour provide a rich source of food for many birds during the winter. Many geese, ducks and waders come here as the mud is packed with food such as worms and shellfish. It is like a birds' supermarket!

Brent geese travel all the way from Siberia in northern Russia where they breed. They spend the winter feeding on saltmarsh plants and crops in the farmers' fields.



Brent geese feeding.



Brent geese flying.

Some birds come to this country only in the summer. They are called summer visitors and they mainly eat insects. There are not many insects to eat in this country in the winter because it is too cold.

Countries near the equator are warm all the year round. They are a good



place to be during our winter but they are too hot in the summer for the birds to be able to raise a family. South of the equator it is summer between September and April when we have our winter. By spending our winter in countries south of the equator they enjoy two summers and have plenty of insects to eat! Swallows and House Martins spend the winter in Africa and the summer in this country.

Swallows nesting at Dell Quay

Some birds stop off in this country when they are migrating in the spring and autumn but don't stay here for very long. They are called passage migrants. They use the same route every year.

One of these routes follows the coasts from Norway through Denmark, Holland, along the east and south coasts of Britain and then down the west coast of France, Spain and then Africa. This is called the East Atlantic Flyway. It is like a bird motorway. Birds can't usually complete their migration in one go. They travel part of the way and then they look for places to stop, rest and feed on their long journey. These stopping places are very important. They are like motorway service stations. Chichester Harbour is one of these places.

Birds such as Greenshanks use Chichester Harbour as a stopping place. To find out more about greenshank migration, click here.

http://www.greenshank.info/schools/all_about_greenshanks.html



A Greenshank
